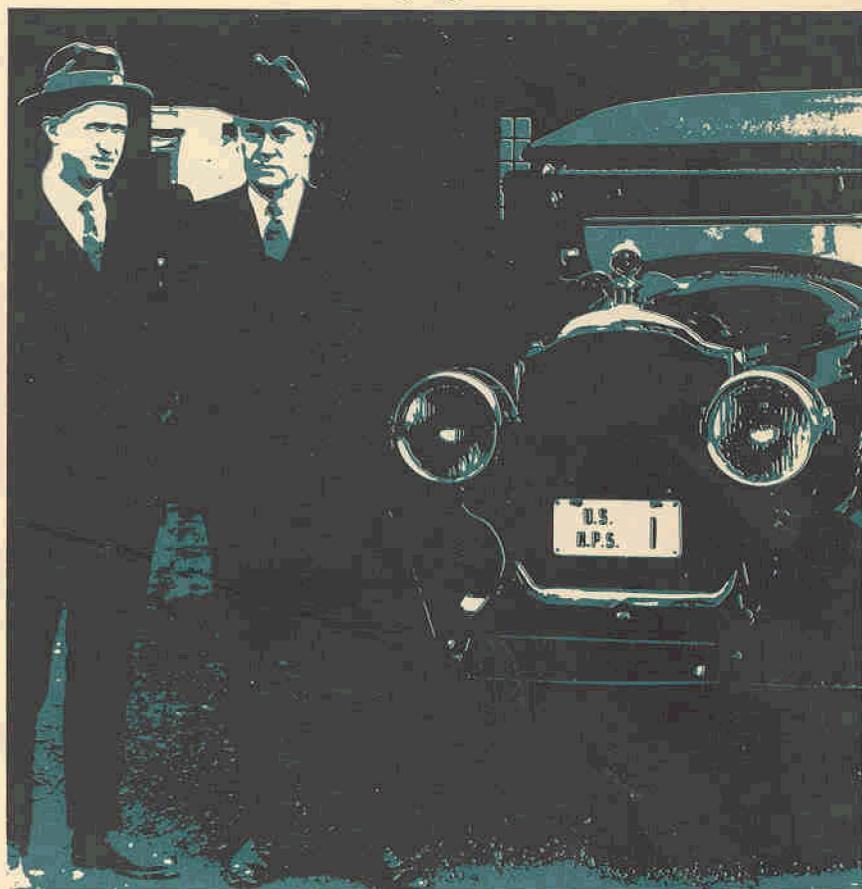

THE
MATHER-**A**LBRIGHT
YEARS



NATIONAL PARKS COME TO AMERICA!

by Lon Garrison

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Actually the Congress—and I mean the United States Congress—passed the National Park Service Enabling Act on August 25, 1916—and I mean the Bill that added this new idea of National Parks to the American and the World law books. The two years that followed were wonderfully exciting times in conservation history! Fortunately Steve Mather and Horace Albright were in the eye of the hurricane it started—and they were a team of vigorous, practical and persistent idealists. I want to tell you about it, for I got into it too, although I must use as my nostalgic entrance point for their story my own National Park Service beginnings which were sixteen years later at the Lodgepole Campground in Sequoia National Park in July of 1932.

That summer I was a Seasonal Ranger in Sequoia and one day in late July, District Ranger Irv Kerr and I rode horseback to Pattee Creek to plant fingerling rainbow trout. This was in the northwest corner of the park, high on the western flank of the Sierra Nevada. We had left the Lodgepole ranger station at 3:00 a.m.—well before daylight—leading a short pack string of four mules, each loaded with two big pack cans, each can holding ten gallons of ice water and 1,000 rainbow trout fry. Our travel was at the mules' pace—plod-plod-plod—we had eight horizontal miles to go plus one vertical mile up and down hill. The sun rose, early morning dust hung in the damp air, the cloying smell of blooming chinquapin was in our nostrils as we continued. By 6:00 a.m. we were at Cahoon Gap and plodded on. We crossed Clover Creek at the ranger cabin and began the last three miles of uphill travel with occasional stops for the mules to ease their breathing. Our saddles were mighty hard!

At 9:00 a.m. we reached Pattee Creek in Pattee Meadow just below J O Pass. The water in the heavily iced cans was still cool and our wriggly cargo was in good condition for the transfer. I learned Irv's water tempering and fish planting techniques that morning and in fact used them successfully myself over the next two decades.

Pattee Creek was a barren stream—should we have introduced trout into it? I ask myself this question in 1980 but in 1932 it was not moot for a beginning ranger!

Then with the little fish successfully in the stream we stacked the empty fish cans under a huge fir tree, loosened the cinches on the pack mules and the saddle horses and turned them loose to graze on noisy gobbles of the luxuriant grass. Irv and I scraped a fire-safe ring through the duff and settled down to eat our own lunch, warm some coffee and smoke a relaxing pipe. The small lush green oval of Pattee Meadow was on the north just before us. Beyond it was J O Pass at full 9300 feet elevation. Around to the east were Kettle Peak and Mount Silliman. Behind us and on to the west were miles and miles of mountain wilderness—forests, streams, mountains, wildlife—but it was not frightening that sunny morning. It was friendly and comfortable and beautiful to me.

The summers of 1929-1930 I had worked in Alaska as a Forest Guard on the Chugach National Forest. I had taught school two years in Haines, Alaska, for the winters. Now, I had come “outside,” finished my degree work at Stanford University and was hunting a job as a school teacher!

In Alaska I had wooed and won Inger Larsen; four pound, squint-eyed son Lars, with big feet and appetite had just arrived. I had met him briefly in San Jose ten days ago. I would see him again in September. But right now Inger and Lars were still in San Jose. I had found this temporary ranger job—and it was exciting! I took another look around at Pattee Meadow. Ay—it was superb! And to be custodian of this great natural beauty and provide public services for park visitors—Ay! That was great too! The whole idea of national parks was inviting. But, was there a way to make a living out of it?

I began by asking Irv more about parks and about how he got his job. The best use of this kind of scenery was obviously to look at it. I would love to help! Thus, like the Indian youth who goes forth into the wilderness one day seeking his “medicine” and his “Spirit” for future guidance and direction, I went forth that morning to plant a fish and I returned with my heart ablaze with a new vision. I could be a ranger!

My inquiries all came up positive if I wanted to wait it out, which I did. What a beautiful dream! FDR had been elected and three years and three months later I entered on

duty as a permanent ranger at Hetch Hetchy in Yosemite National Park. The intervening years were often hungry times—one seasonal short-term job after another—but we made it!

But as I talked with Irv that July morning at Pattee Meadows I had asked him one strangely prophetic question—“What about politics and working for the government? How political is a park ranger career?” I was not afraid of it—I just wanted to know!

It was a strangely timely question. I had not known that Irv had sought political support in 1925 to move from his job as a pattern maker with the Packard Motor Company in Detroit to his park ranger slot. And I had conveniently forgotten that I had my own seasonal ranger job only because my father as Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Ogden, Utah, ten years previously had performed the marriage ceremony for Jack Diehl, one of his younger parishioners and a highway engineer who by 1932 just happened to be on the staff at Sequoia National Park. I had met him while job hunting. He recognized the name and most helpfully had remembered to suggest my name for a Sequoia Park ranger job when there was an unexpected vacancy in June of 1932. Politics? Whom do you know? It pervades everything we do with other people! It is mainly what I write about.

But at Pattee Meadow, Irv assured me that politics was a no-no. We were not pressured by this kind of interference. Irv believed this implicitly. Then I believed it too and I found that all park rangers believed it. Our “calling” was like a sacred trust, above the mundane cross-fire of trade-outs and political influence.

In fact Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, had explicitly told the new National Park Service Director, Stephen T. Mather, that politics was not a factor in his selection and employment.

I lost my own innocence in this direction rather promptly, but purely from rationalization that such attractive jobs must be politically tempting. And, in fact we did have a number of seasonal ranger jobs that were set aside for political appointees but the political price was high for the sponsor and appointees were usually well motivated.

But then I began learning about the beginnings of the National Park Service and its political realities. I must jump

back 16 years from 1932 to 1916 which was the legislative action year, although the drama began to develop much earlier—probably in 1913 when President Woodrow Wilson chose Franklin K. Lane as his Secretary of Interior. As I read the political realities of that situation, Lane who was the City Attorney for San Francisco, California, was probably chosen for the Interior post because of *two* evident “national” problems. The *first* and the most political had to do with San Francisco’s drinking water. For some years the city had focused on the Tuolumne River in Yosemite National Park as their future water supply. There were alternatives, but somehow the attack was focused on the Tuolumne. This was before there was a National Park Service but it still required legislation to breach the protective wall of the Yosemite Act of 1890. Under the leadership of Lane and San Francisco Congressman, John Raker, it was done. A dam was built across the Tuolumne at Hetch Hetchy—later the site of my first permanent ranger job! The dam was a tragedy which mightily distressed John Muir and other early conservationists. But surprisingly, Raker then became a supporter of the *second* major program Interior must carry, and introduced legislation in the House to create a National Park Service. This is politics!

But more clout was needed and Secretary Lane invited Professor Adolph Miller, an economist from the University of California to come to Washington to help him get action on Raker’s National Park Service proposal.

But Adolph Miller did not stay long. He had great ideas and major political input into policy and legislation about the Federal Reserve Board. So he moved over to the Treasury Department. As he did so, President Wilson is supposed to have facetiously commented that “Lane will have to find another millionaire to work on the National Park legislation.” Miller’s major contribution was that he brought with him a young law student whom Miller called a political reader named Horace Marden Albright. Albright was considerably more durable!

And most fortuitously, Secretary Lane at that same time received a letter from a National Park visitor complaining about the management of the National Parks. I have always assumed that this must have been about Yosemite. The letter was on a first name basis to Lane and signed by “Stephen Mather.” They were University of California friends—as of course Miller and Albright were also! Secretary Lane is reported to have responded with

equal informality—

“ Dear Steve—

If you don't like the way the parks are being run why don't you come down here and run them yourself.

Signed—Frank Lane.”

Mather of course was a likely candidate. He was a successful businessman, the former Editor of the New York Sun, a member of the Sierra Club, a mountain climber, and a friend and admirer of John Muir. But Mather did not want to be a National Park Director. He had other personal commitments. It took considerable negotiation and pressure politics to get Mather to come in and discuss his complaints with Lane. But he did and Lane introduced him to Horace Albright. Lane left them alone together in a private office with a wood fire to review National Park needs. They soon found an affinity of thoughts and principles which sparked a friendship and led to the great working team which exploded into both national and world conservation history.

From a 60 year retrospect it is possible to recreate and comment upon a program that Mather and Albright suggested to Lane that day.

1. Establish the National Park Service. This was a real political job. Mather believed that he could lead it.
2. Create an operational unity for the National Parks within the framework of Interior. This was to be mainly Albright's task.
3. Develop public interest in parks and political support for them. This must be translated into larger appropriations. Political backing must be created. Develop visitor facilities—roads, campgrounds, hotels, trails, and other facilities needed by park visitors. To get bigger appropriations, park use was needed!
5. Add worthy new areas to the National Park system—purge it of unsuitable ones. This could be started promptly.

These are the major points that Mather and Albright reported to Lane, with an offer that they would both stay in Washington to get it done—their estimate of needed time was one year!

Reading between the lines, probably the clincher for Lane was the offer of this team to take it over! Ultimately they succeeded in all but the time frame. They tried but that one year was too optimistic! It took longer.

Their first priority was for new National Park Service legislation. This became a major political campaign. Raker's

bill to set up the National Park Service was a beginning but needed more support and after his rape of Hetch Hetchy, Raker did not have it. But Congressman William Kent, also from San Francisco, was another possible sponsor. Kent had served only briefly, but during that time he had donated a family estate, a magnificent grove of coast redwoods—*Sequoia Sempervirens*—to the National Park Service. It was named for the greatest conservationist of the day—The John Muir National Historical Site.

Kent's willingness to co-sponsor the National Park Service legislation became a great positive factor in the final enactment.

Mather was an old hand at national politicking and was confident that he could get the legislation passed. Albright was an apt student and soon adapted to the requirements of the legislative process. They were an excellent team. Mather often needed help from political laggards and his procedure was to take them to the golf course or on long pack trips or on other great journeys to create National Park enthusiasm. Albright was dependable and had a rapidly growing reputation for honesty and leadership. He was an excellent backer-upper and doer! He had an uncanny perception of political opportunities and his own idealism was evident. The character of these two great men became the standard for the National Park Service. And this was the group I joined in 1932. The vigor and enthusiasm of the "Service" was exemplified by the final successful passage of the "Enabling Act" on August 25, 1916 which became the foundation of the "new" service. There had been delays. Mather and Albright had had to extend their own promised terms for a second year although Albright took time out to return to California and marry the lovely Grace Noble who became so much a part of his later life and leadership.

Politics, flexibility and alternate procedures to move legislation were natural attributes for him. The challenges he faced in the early summer of 1916 were that final actions necessary for completed National Park legislation seemed to be locked up procedurally. A National Park bill had passed both houses but in differing versions, requiring a legislative committee to agree on language to reconcile the House and the Senate versions. Then since this was an election year, Congress took a long recess. Mather used his one sure-fire response to this kind of impasse. He arranged a long trip through his beloved park lands ending up with a pack trip on the John Muir trail in Sequoia National Park. He

hoped to get the parks bill passed in 1917!

Albright stayed behind to keep current on political events, but his febrile and ingenious mind kept working on the problem of the National Park legislation. So near and yet so far—Albright discussed his dilemma with the Chairmen of the two committees—and probably with many others! And with the Chairmen, he contrived a procedure whereby concurrence could be by mail instead of by meetings and suddenly the right configuration of time and people occurred. The committee reports were cleared and the Chairmen signed the bill! Surely a tribute to Albright and his persistence and dependability!

But having the legislative process completed was not the end of that phase.

On the occasion of the final meeting with the Congressional Committee and the legislative staff, Horace overheard one end of a telephone conversation which seemed to be with the President's Office at the White House. Inquiry revealed that the White House staff had called because they needed a document regarding military appropriation. The Congressional mail room was to get this document to President Wilson's office promptly. Horace simply asked the staff people—since they were going over to the White House anyway—to take along the new National Park bill and get it into the flow of paperwork as promptly as possible. Then Horace took off for the White House himself. Between his direct intervention and a telephone call to Secretary Lane, the presidential signature process was accelerated and the bill was signed on August 25, the same day it had cleared the Congress.

The reason for this special attention was simply another demonstration of Horace Albright's humanity and consideration for others. "Mister" Mather was on a pack trip in the Sierra Nevadas with friends and would emerge into civilization that afternoon and stay at the Palace Hotel in Visalia, California.

He was greeted by a telegram from Albright advising him that the National Park legislation was enacted! And as a clincher, Horace had had the foresight to request Mr. Maurice Latta of the White House legislative staff to save the pen with which President Wilson signed this great legislation!

Thus to this day in the Director's office of the National Park Service in Washington, this particular telegram and the supportive pen are framed and displayed on the wall as

reminders of our controversial beginnings.

When they finally met again, the messages between these two remain unknown but surely they were filled with joy, enthusiasm, pride, humility and love! Mather was to be the Chief of a new agency—one with a mission of preservation and conservation and his dreams must have exploded as he contemplated the vista before him!

He must now emerge with a management plan which would honor the resources, provide for the human mission of use, and then envelope the other great places Stephen Mather had in mind as national parks!

He did not come to this point unaware of the dimensions—he was eager to be on with the job—but first he probably needed a good night's sleep!

I will mention one item in the successful implementation of their program. In 1937, fifteen years after my own conversion to National Park ideals I was a ranger guide assigned to escort a group of civil engineers from Spain and France on a tour of Yosemite National Park. Mid-afternoon found us at Glacier Point where the great dimension of Yosemite Valley burst upon us. I called attention to the view to the east with the blue profile of the Sierra Nevada crest with the foreground of Half Dome and the trail to Tenaya Lake. It was wasted, for all eyes were upon the sunlit abyss of Yosemite Valley, 3400 feet below, with people in miniature busy upon the roads, in the campgrounds and along the Merced River. After one startled glance the engineers exclaimed, "What a great place to build a dam!" and it was, but as we looked and conversed, it soon became obvious that this could not be a dam site simply because it was already in use—recreational use by hundreds of people then, hundreds of thousands in 1980.

This kind of insurance for park protection was the goal that Mather sought. Of course he did not get instant visitation but he got a start and enough publicity about it that few really tried to oust or compromise the park through adverse uses after the decade of the 1920's. At one time, however, Mather and Albright were faced with a sizable list of developments, alternate uses such as grazing, irrigation, power, logging, or mining, and legislative attempts for other uses of park lands by some "minor" invasions for use for non-park purposes. The courage and the vigor with which Mather and Albright defended the parks is almost forgotten. But it was an object lesson to a new park ranger! Yes, this was a great outfit to join!

And meantime, Albright was busily weaving together

the ties of organizational patterns, the relationships with the Interior Department, which made this a viable operational unity.

So, if their timetable was to be achieved—even with their one year extension, they had better be about it!

To help achieve a better definition of National Park Service goals, Mather and Albright convened "The Fourth National Park Conference" in Washington on January 2, 1917. The language of the "Enabling Act" of 1916 was an idealistic document, and park supporters were delighted with it. But in getting down to details of the meaning of the quality of preservation and use, park neighbors, Congressional leaders, and business concerns with park interests were confused. So were park rangers.

The Conference title as The Fourth National Park Conference could be misleading because conferences one through three had simply been informational meetings of park management people and tourist-minded businesses with discussions of railroad tours, stage coach and bus schedules, hotel construction, photographing wildlife and the like although there were occasional substantive items such as a report in 1912 on admission of automobiles into National Parks.

But in 1916-1917 park management was looking for ideas about park use, park preservation, park roads, park concessions, park management, park personnel, and new parks.

To this end, Mather loaded the 1917 program with the Secretary of the Interior himself, six members of Congress and one Senator, representatives of other government bureaus involved such as the Biological Survey and the Forest Service. Other speakers represented every level of park visitor from garden clubs, women's clubs, university professors, learned scientists, an artist, a logger, a forester, a minister, a housewife who took her children on burro pack trips, and Orville Wright, one of the famous first aircraft fliers! There were a total of 51 speakers in the five days, plus three evenings of lantern slides and a special exhibition of National Park art.

Their advice to Steve Mather was very broad in scope, but reading their report nearly 60 years later, the impression comes through clearly that it was thoughtful, forward looking, idealistic, practical, and above all, sincere. Suggestions ranged from the purists who would close the parks to all except a few scientists and artists, up to the logger who would operate the parks as if they were commercial forest

reserves. From all this he must finally select a compromise or middle position which, in effect, planned for development of roads and tourist facilities on small parts of the parks—the play-ground equivalents—and preserved most of the parks in an original wilderness status.

But it didn't happen right away. Abruptly Steve Mather's apparently inexhaustible energy faltered and before the conference had ended, he suffered a nervous breakdown which layed him low for over a year. During that time, Horace Albright continued to carry the tasks well and constructively. It was a period for organizing and for gathering political strength and force. It was indeed a time of outright and head-on attacks on park land withdrawals. Yellowstone was the favorite target for many of these land hunters. The proposals were variously made such as under the guise of the alleged need for a railroad to marginal mines at Cooke City, Montana. There never were successful mines at Cooke City. But this would cut off the north end of the park, which was what the miners wanted. The power people wanted a major dam in the Bechler River country to benefit the Idaho potato farmers, or a low level dam at the outlet of Yellowstone Lake for water to provide irrigation and firm power downstream in Montana. Each of these challenges to preservation was met publicly with vigor and courage and soon vanished, although Secretary of the Interior Fall's fortuitous resignation is probably all that blocked a Bechler River project. This was a major concern. Mather and Albright had agreed that they would both resign if Fall persisted. Fortunately, Fall resigned instead.

Then in May, 1918, a vital event took place that would have far reaching effects. Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane addressed a long letter to Steve Mather, explicitly setting forth most of the major principles for park management to follow. They included such concepts as priority of the national interests, non-utilization of resources for any commercial purposes, provision for concessions, the priority of public use and enjoyment—still familiar guidelines today!

Many of us who are interested in the history of national park policy have asked our friend, Horace Albright, the Acting Director on that date, who really produced this set of guidelines. Horace's invariable reply has been that Secretary Lane signed it, so it must be presumed that he wrote it. The apparent lack of concern previously shown by Secretary Lane, the similarity of the substance with the

report of the 1917 Conference, and the often expressed concern of both Mather and Albright for the principles in the letter, at least suggest that Albright or Mather or both of them may have at least drafted it. The record shows only that it is the Lane Policy Letter, and Mather and Albright, ever the astute and effective politicians, gladly endorsed it but declined credit for this effective discussion of policy. However, this has never been a quiescent issue. The Lane Policy Letter is quoted again and again and always is available to point back to the beliefs of those leaders of 1918—where did we start?

In 1974 this became a living issue for me as I was invited to prepare a manuscript for a special training program for young park superintendents at Albright Training Academy under the title of "The Mather-Albright Years." I checked my manuscript with Horace himself and to my great delight I not only received endorsement of the material, much of which I have presented to you today, but further enlightenment about those evanescent years of 1917-1918 when things suddenly coalesced for National Park Service beginnings but likewise fell apart because of Steve Mather's illness. Yet this interim period of eighteen months ended gloriously with Stephen Mather as Director, Horace Albright as Assistant Director, a budget, a liaison with the field people, an operating headquarters organization and public affairs in good shape. Much of this constructive result is because of the Lane Policy Letter.

Many of us had honored Steve Mather and Horace Albright's word that Secretary Lane wrote this Magna Carta. We did this mainly out of respect for Horace rather than any great conviction about Secretary Lane. My exposure to Cabinet Officers, and particularly to the precepts and the decisions of Secretary Lane shows that he just did not work that way. I have never known a political bureaucrat to perform this kind of chore for himself. It is left to a staff officer—i.e., in this case, Albright—who can be endorsed or rejected according to public response.

Steve Mather himself could have written such a report and planning document, but he was out of action. He could not have been the author at that particular time.

Then on March 15, 1976, Horace with some diffidence asked me a very personal question.

"...I thought I could write and ask you a question. In 1965 soon after George Hartzog took over from Connie

Wirth he had his regional directors and former directors at a meeting in Philadelphia after which he went up to Darien and the Old Mather Homestead was designated an historical landmark. Remember? In the Philadelphia meeting there was a review of N.P.S. history and Secretary Lane's Letter of May, 1918, was brought into the review. Several asked who wrote this letter. Nobody said anything, then you, turning to me, said, 'Horace, you must have been Acting Director at the time, didn't you write it?' You had me cornered. I had to admit that I did but asked that nothing be said to this effect; that I had kept the information under cover for over 40 years and would like to let things stand. But you had smoked me out!

"Now I have noted that from time to time the question still comes up and wonder expressed as to who wrote it, for Mr. Mather had not yet completely recovered from his breakdown of 1917, Lane had no reputation for deep interest in National Parks, so I must have had much to do with the composition. I have wondered whether it might be time for somebody to come out and tell the whole truth about the letter and I have thought that if this is to be done, you should have the 'scoop'. If you want it of course. I think I had better let you tell the story along with recounting how you brought out my part as far back as 1964. Let me know if you want to and I'll agree. Faithfully yours, HMA"

I am pleased that the record has finally been set straight and that we may publicly acknowledge ALL of Horace's contributions. I am more pleased that he asked me to spread the word.

And Horace, I have done so with thanks—it has also let me set the record straight on my own 1932 beginnings! Thank you again!

Lon Garrison
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11/12/80



Lemuel A. Garrison entered the National Park Service in July of 1932 as a Seasonal Park Ranger at Sequoia National Park and later served in Park Ranger positions at Yosemite National Park. In 1939 he became the first superintendent of Hopewell Village National Historic Site. Two years later he was assigned to the Washington Office as Assistant Chief, Office of Information. In June, 1942, he was appointed Assistant Superintendent, Glacier National Park. Three years later, he transferred to Grand Canyon National Park, where he served in the same capacity for seven years.

In November, 1952, he became the second Superintendent of Big Bend National Park. In January, 1955, Mr. Garrison was selected as the first Chief of Conservation and Protection in the Washington Office. He served concurrently as Chairman of the Steering Committee for MISSION 66. In November, 1956, he was promoted to Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park. He later served as Regional Director for both the Midwest and Northeast Regions. His final position was as the Director of Albright Training Center at Grand Canyon National Park.

Mr. Garrison now serves as Visiting and Guest Professor and Lecturer, Texas A&M University, Recreational and Parks Department, College Station, Texas.

In 1962, Mr. Garrison was granted the Distinguished Service Award by Stewart Udall, Secretary of Department of the Interior.